The Wine Drop

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THE WINE DROP
AND OTHER POEMS

illiam John

BY

W. MURRAY MARSDEN
Officier d'Académie

αὖραι φέρουσι τὰς παλαίας ἐλπίδας

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TO

W. M. AND K. R. M.

TO THE READER

THESE attempts were made, as their dates will show, in comparatively few years, with a considerable interval.

Nothing is claimed by way of achievement, but there may be some interest attaching to a revival of endeavour in this kind after a long (and fortunate) period of deliberate abstention.

To friends this may serve as an explanation, and to strangers as an apology.

28.2.22 W. M. M.

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THE WINE-DROP

THE Highest wrought a goblet, *Misery*,
Wherein to pour his wine of *Happiness*,
The which his hand sent down or more or less
To fit the purpose of what was to be;
And graven on the cup were figures three,
Likest *Remorse*, *Despair* and *Fearfulness*.
And round about them garlands of *Distress*,
Thorny and flowerless, not sucked of bee.
From out this goblet doth the Highest sip
When that he will, for taste or longer draught:
And once a golden drop fell from his lip,
Trickled, and reached the sad mouth of *Despair;*
Whereat it seemed as though the figure laughed,
—And in the laughing it was wondrous fair.

1896

TO CERTAIN OF MY ENEMIES

YE shall not slay all beauty with your rules
That trample on the God-love of the heart.
Say ye not, God is love, and do your part
To preach a God of hatred, seeking tools
For carving hearts one shape, not hearts? Ye fools,
Presumptuous and insensate—else the smart
Of others' love destroyed had made you start,
And cringing, pray God make men know you mules.
For all your life is choked with stubbornness:
Striving for ends that none, save fools, would seek,
Ye talk with tongues that the steel bit should press,
Brainless, and knowing nought of men or things!
O for some Truth, some lightning Truth to speak
And daze and blast your vain imaginings!

1895

IN THE EVIL DAY

O IT is pitiful! And shall men pray,
And crouch, and lift their weary hands to God
—At best the wielder of a cruel rod,
Blind, unavailing, but to wound and slay?
Surely your God is good. His gift this day
Whereon I live, but in the wish to die.
Surely your God is good. I bless Him, I
That owe to Him my happiness' decay.
Ay, it is well to pray. Then, O Thou Love,
I pray to thee, for that thou gavest the life
That now the world would poison with its breath.
I pray, or let me live, or use the knife,
And still the heart that thou alone canst move:
The God that gave me life shall give me death.

1895

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY

BY grace of God a slender floweret grew,
White, swayed of zephyrs, purer than the air,
That said in whispers "it is very fair,"
And decked each petal with a pearl of dew.
But round about were flowers of coarser hue,
Content to meet and match with ruder stare
The heat of noon, the sun's most ardent glare—
Till some would say "The white grows bolder too."
And one that loved the floweret more than all,
And chiefly loved its grace and purity,
Thought shame to hear them speak, thus standing by.
So, making of his thought a trumpet-call
He set himself to bear the floweret thence,
To where himself might yield it reverence.

1897

GARDENING

ABOUT thee stillness of November trees,
And some late thought of summer, glancing down
To find the golden in thy tresses brown.
Along thou workest, face bent to thy knees,
Too diligent. Not labours such as these
For thee, dear bravest. If I dust thy gown
And take thy spade and kiss it, wilt thou frown?
Nay, be not angry—only take thine ease,
And come, and sit by this rough wall's defence,
And let the sunbeams find those eyes of blue
Whereto so often have they gladly flown.
And he that can no fuller homage do,
Let him give thanks for that which thou hast shown
Of love and trust beyond all recompense.

1901

"RUAN"

FOR A.C.F.

THE press of housen hindered so the light,
I did not see him when I came therein,
Into the chamber where the paladin,
His gold all grizzled, old Sir Ruan hight,
Was couchant, unregardant of the wight
Who moved, and with the leaves of books made thin,
Unsuited sounds, to his thoughts not akin
That lay there thinking on his days of might.
God rest thee, sir, and send thee dreams enow,
Annulling these ill days. So northern fell,
And sunny streets and terraces and trees,
So heather-pollen (hark to Ruan sneeze!)
And scent of sheep, of hare across the plough
Shall ease thee, till thy paws tread asphodel.

1918

MY MOTHER, PLAYING THE PIANO AGAIN

WONDERFULLY hast Thou wrought, O Lord our God,
And all we keys, or black or white, agree,
Her fingers bidding us well-used, to Thee
Uplifting true *Te Deum* to Thine abode—
We that were silent long, whenas there rode
Pale death along the path to this roof-tree,
And melody shuddered and shuddered harmony,
And the folk moved with silent sorrow shod.
But Thou didst stay that riding with Thine hand,
And sparedst still their dear one to the folk,
So as they now go glad and thankfully:
And we, beneath the tender mistress-stroke,
Utter again sweet praise at her command:
—O Lord our God, Thou hast wrought wonderfully.

1918

ARE WE CONTENT?

(BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR RETURNING THROUGH GERMANY AFTER THE ARMISTICE)

LET us be merry, friends—the day is won,
Justice hath put injustice under her feet,
No longer is there any dread : 'tis meet
We should rejoice together, everyone!
(*Give me a hand, mate, I am nearly done,*
But I'll not fall out in a German street
Nor let them think that at this last they've beat
The British soldier. Thanks, mate; carry on.)
And so at home the folk were very glad,
And so abroad the prisoners marched home
Slowly, unheralded, tattered and torn,
Shadows of men, for very weakness sad.
Are we content to see them where they come
Ourselves rejoicing—and themselves forlorn?

1919

"SPRAT"

FOR E.C.S.S.

ONCE more, dear little white dog, I pat your head,
And once more find your muzzle in my hand,
Reminding me how well you understand
A thousand things that we have never said,
Nor never will. You lick my hand instead,
Then leave me at your mistress' command
And go to face whatever fate has planned
Of kind or harsh along the ways you tread;
Ay, little dog, each year it is "once more"—
Once more, a fond retracing of the past,
(O little white dog that followed her on the hill,
You may not find her now, howe'er you cast!),
Yet may we meet, old lady, thus, until
You pass to where Things Shall Be As Before.

1921

"BENEDICTUS"

FOR E.C.S.S.

"BLESSED be the Lord" the people all do sing,
Standing within the holy Margaret's church;
And through the eastern window, see, a birch
Is waving slowly, its delicate crest a-swing:
And hark, without, the swallows chattering,
Whereas above the eaves the young do perch
Waiting their mother from her arrowy search,
And what small prey her quick return may bring.
Yea, "visited and redeemed" so do we chant—
And soon the voices soften ere they cease:
O tune well-loved, O little church—O dead
That hearken from the stillness of your peace,
With us was made that steadfast covenant,
Whereto the trees and birds have witnessed.

1921

NOTES OF A LOSS

I

SIQUA recordanti. . . .
So the poet, and I,
Dazed with a blow in the dark
All uncertainly bow,
Tremble, and catch at the words.
Aye, Catullus is hard:
What is it—"*ingrato?*"
Nay, never ungrateful,
Never a grave for me
Where but now was a heart.
Rather, the ruler of things
Stamped on the bauble and crushed;
Rather, a too keen wind
Withered and killed the bud.
"*Difficile est*"—Ah, true!
"*Verum hoc efficias*" . . .
Would that I might—and yet
Deep in the bitter is sweet,
Unseen, sunk very far,
Not of my making, but Love's:
—*This* to be cast away?
Tell me, Catullus—Again,
Siqua recordanti. . . .
So, it is still to bear.

1895

II

I WILL cry to the Universal God, and say to Him,
"Heal my Soul, for lo, it is sick unto death"—
Death? I cannot hold my sorrow is naught but play to Him:
Why should He take it away that giveth the breath?

Even now, in the brief night-season flashes Eternity,
Setting aside all lapse of time and growth.
Hush the children's cry! Doth it vex that great Paternity?
Love,—if I pray for love will the God wax wroth?

Hours have been that were grace-abounding—grant me dreams of them,
God, O God, if thou wilt not grant the truth;
Let my darkness at times be lightened, bright with gleams of them:
See—there is service wherein yet availeth youth!

Will He hearken, the High Sphere-Ruler, God that useth me
Or despiseth the tool that is, maybe, blunt?
Is there anger against my soul in the grasp that bruiseth me?
Can it be that the Truth conceiveth affront?

Nay, 'tis I that lack understanding—God taketh pride in him:
Even as I, so the Power would keep him whole;
I from others, God from me. And I will confide in Him,
Find my joy in the sparing a perfect soul.

1896

III

I PLAYED in the game of love—and lost;
My happiness, that was the stake.
I gave my soul herself. The cost?
It purges the pride, that same heart-ache.

The soul of a man is the soul of him,
And another may let it go:
And what if the man give rein to the whim,
Or the death of his soul some life bestow?

All are not able to fight or toil:
Way for the stepping-stones!
We take no hire and we win no spoil,
But the others leap from our collar-bones.

So I played—and the end was soon.
—Never a lane without a bend—
But or ever I die, one boon, one boon—
His soul that won may the God defend!

1896

IV

THE end that he longed not for
Is the end of every man :
Since the living of men began
They win but the thing they abhor.

Shadows are we of a truth,
Longing to know ourselves ;
And the gold that a shadow delves
Is shadow-gold, brings with it ruth.

For a space it is, "I did this,
And the work that I wrought was mine"—
But anon is a growl or a whine,
"Force has been spent amiss."

And one in another may feel
Some part of himself is bound:
—Dead, and the good clay ground
Will never a thought reveal.

Or one and another in love
Have known for a while some end:
"Mine own familiar friend . . .
So—I will not reprove."

The end that he longed not for
Is the end of every man;
Since the living of men began,
They win but the thing they abhor.

1896

V

IT was not to your mind, friend,
That we should be as one,
And long my soul repined, friend,
For that your words had done:
But now I seem to find, friend,
That what was well begun,
May not be cast behind, friend,
For each new pleasure won.

It may be I was weak, friend,
And bore my sorrow ill,
In hope to hear you speak, friend,
The simple friend-word still;
Yet pride and love bade seek, friend,
The cause that moved your will:
The way was very bleak, friend,
And weary was the hill.

Our lives may be apart, friend,
But is the world so wide
That never from the start, friend,
We may go side by side?
Yet this is all my part, friend,
Howe'er the fate decide,
To care that in my heart, friend,
The thought of you abide.

1896

NOTES OF A LIFE

EARLY SEPTEMBER

CAN it be? Has time stayed?
Draws not the autumn near,
Fade not the leaves, fall sere?
Joy for you, youth and maid,
Surely the summer is here!

Brightly dewed in the sun
Glitters the sloping lawn,
Where, from earliest dawn,
Brushing the blades pearl-strawn,
Moorhens timorous run.

Hot from o'erhead his rays
Phœbus darts on the flowers,
Golden, vital in showers.
See where yon fire-head towers—
All the garden's ablaze! . . .

Nay, but even is come,
Suddenly cloaks us round;
Chilling rise from the ground
Mists, and hushed is the sound
Told us of harvest-home.

Is it the winter ye dread,
Ye twain, raising your eyes
Rapt, to the western skies?
Listen, the oak there sighs,
Shuddering bows its head.

Sigh ye not, nor grieve;
    Know that the tree has grown
    Oak, from an acorn sown:
Look to Spring, and believe.
—"Aye, but summer is gone."

1892

GOETHE AND MENDELSSOHN

SOFTLY, softly, my child!
Let not the notes too wild
    Break on the calm of my soul.
Peacefully lull me to rest
Here in the dark, where best
    Soothes me the deep chords' roll.

Verily unto the grave
Come all, cowards and brave,
    Unto the ages of night:
Cowards that trifled with truth,
Brave that fought to their ruth
    Sickened at wrong, for the right.

What! may Goethe complain?
Dulled by the years, poor brain,
    Holdest not well any more?
All but for death my birth,
Was it? The Spirit of Earth
    Knows what the old tree bore.

Boy, strike hope from the keys!
Saddening mists are these,
    Youth shall bid them away.
Young thy being and strong,
Pouring the nature-song
    Fresh on my latest day.

Much thou teachest me, son,
Me with a work now done,
    Thou still yearning to do:
I have sung, thou shalt sing,
Aye, and merrier, wing
    Up to the heart of the blue.

Much have I known in the world,
Great to destruction hurled
    Headlong, and small soon great:
Surely, thou'llt speak to the heart:
Yet not happiest—part,
    Felix, shows dark in thy fate.

1893

SPRING AND GROWTH

MAN. ROAR of peoples and wrangle of kings,
Rage and madness of party-strife,
Millions battling for daily life,
Youth age-tinged at its earliest springs.

EARTH. Peace, and rest, and a warmer breeze,
Blowing of flowers and greening of sod:
Earth's spring-smile to the face of God,
New year's song in the skies and the trees.

MAN. Doubt unending, fools' dismay,
Seekings for truth when truth is found,
Frail held strong and rotten sound,
Moans of the dark in the elder day.

EARTH. Faith, shining clear in the deeper blue,
Hope, when the buds swell out to the leaf;
Healing of spring to the winter's grief.
—Grows God's work as ever it grew.

1893

SHELLEY

IT was the deep of a winter's day,
The earth and the air were as steel,
And round his wheel
The miller saw the brook diademed on its way.

The cattle, with muzzles that sorely flinched,
Sniffed at the cold, grey ground,
And scant fare found;
For nature wore a face all poverty-pinched.

A fair-plumed bird, some maiden's toy,
Some gift of a lover afar,
Through a broken bar
Flew out like a gleam of light to freedom and joy.

Flitting, it cheerily sang to the air
Strange notes—but anon 'twas chilled:
Its flight now stilled
Of liberty, ever it sang—how new, how fair!

Yet none was glad of the song. None heard
But the beasts. They wistfully gazed,
Sad, weary, amazed:
Nought in that land could hearken the strange, bright bird.

1895

COUNSEL

MAN lifteth his eyes from the sod,
He lifteth his eyes to the sun:
"With the glory that I am one,
And one with the spirit of God.

"O God, for sake of thine own . . ."
But stealthily passes a cloud;
No prayer is uttered aloud,
'Tis changed for a curse or a moan.

The face of the heavens is dimmed,
Dulled as with æons of pain;
And man looks downward again,
Goes on his way slow-limbed.

Stay, friend—fit spade to thy hand,
Breathe hard at the toil of a plough,
Force sweat to the lines of thy brow . . .
"And then shall I understand?"

Not yet. For the well-turned soil
Brings pride to the heart of a man,
And pride lieth under the ban:
Toil thou for the love of the toil.

1897

QUESTION OF LOVE

HAND that I may not touch,
Eyes that I must not see,
When you are near, how much
Further apart are we,
Hand that I may not touch,
Eyes that I must not see?

1897

TO VIOLETS

FOR A.K.H.

THE little petals, they defy
The paler sky of early spring,
Or, with a growing purity,
Bear on the cry that snowdrops bring:
—Away with fears, let be regrets,
For God has given violets.

All timid as uncertain love
They do reprove the blust'ring wind;
And when their leaves asunder move,
Lo, treasure-trove of spring behind.
Then foolish is the heart that frets,
When God has given violets.

The creeds and the philosophies,
In sundrywise illumine us
With more or less of truth and lies,
With dogma-cries and verbal fuss:
—But he reads idly who forgets
That God has given violets.

O, use the scented blossoms well—
For who can tell the Spirit's plan,
Or all the heavy doubts dispel
That make rebel the mind of Man?
He wisest who before him sets
The God who gives us violets.

1897

COLLOQUY OF FLOWERS

SUCH calm eyes has she who tends us,
All we rise from the earth and say,
Thank we all the Queen that sends us
Courage, hope, when the rude east bends us,
Whispering words of a summer day.

Such strong hands are hers to bind us,
All we, propped and helped anew,
Know we all that she will find us,
Raise and twine as she has twined us,
Succouring petal and green leaf too.

Such kind lips she has, our warden,
All we, smiling upward, ask,
Ask we all, her whole love-garden,
One stooped kiss—and then a pardon,
Setting her love so heavy a task.

Such brave thoughts has she; to greet her
All we have but one intent:
Bloom we all daintier, sweeter;
Then each morning-tide shall meet her
Daintiest colour and sweetest scent.

1899

FIRST VIOLETS

MY bees are not yet come abroad,
Still sleep the butterflies:
The rook there shivered as he cawed,
Each lamb by its mother lies.

Sir Chaffinch—hark, to make amends
How boastful is his song!
But, oh, how suddenly it ends—
Almost he sings it wrong!

Below him, in the fitful sun
Are one, two violets.
Nay, blossoming is not begun,
My over-eager pets.

Come, I will lay brown earth on you,
Against the east wind blow,
And I must soil your petals blue
—They will be warmer, so.

Too early flowered too often fails—
We know it, you and I;
But sometimes giving all avails,
And giving all, to die.

Surely you love the sunshine—love
And long to greet it. See,
I will the chill brown earth remove;
Where love is, let love be.

1899

LITTLE DI
(A PAINTING)

YOU, looking out upon this,
All this medley of sights,
Sorrows a few, and delights
Many—a strange new place,
This that you've come to, miss,
Wonderful, wise, wee face.

Solemnly gaze large eyes—
Shudder, O sham world, quake,
These your measure shall take
Turn you to utter disgrace!
Frown—and the sham world flies,
Wonderful, wise, wee face.

What are you thinking, brows,
Out of the rough, bright hair
Over the deep eyes there?
Dear, are you trying to trace
Order in "why's" and "how's,"
Wonderful, wise, wee face?

Why do they bid you look?
How can you be so still?
Little lips frame "I *will*."
Yes, 'twas a very hard case;
Hours and hours they took,
Wonderful, wise, wee face.

Grave little maid up there,
    Soon they will set you free,
    Happy as happy may be,
Ready to run me a race,
Out of the high-backed chair,
    —Wonderful, wise, wee face.

1900

SPRING, 1918

IN Lincoln's Inn Fields the leaves are green,
    Are glimmering green and gay;
Under the shade, and in between,
    Children chatter and play.

The sweet spring comes, as ever she comes,
    A-triumphing over death . . .
Aloft an aery engine hums . . .
    Christendom gasps for breath.

O children, children, under the trees,
    O spring, that comest of God,
Fail not in leaf and chattering, please
    —Bloom, O chastening rod.

1918

MOEL EILEO

MOEL EILEO standeth fast;
(Beer at the Bull at Llanbedr)
Scrambling first or crawling last,
'Tis fine up there when the climb is past—
(Cool beer at the Bull at Llanbedr).

Moel Eileo gazeth round;
(Beer at the Bull at Llanbedr)
At the falcon hunting his lower ground,
To Carnedd Llewellyn's iron-wrought bound—
(Strong beer at the Bull at Llanbedr).

Moel Eileo's scalp is domed;
(Beer at the Bull at Llanbedr)
And the hairs thereof are for ever combed
By winds that whistling far have roamed—
(Rare beer at the Bull at Llanbedr).

Moel Eileo groweth no grapes;
(Beer at the Bull at Llanbedr)
But big brown birds with feathery capes,
That rend warm grouse where their eaglet gapes—
(Brown beer at the Bull at Llanbedr).

Moel Eileo feigneth sleep;
(Beer at the Bull at Llanbedr)
Leave we him up there, with his steep,
Heathery flanks, and adown we creep—
(Beer, beer at the Bull at Llanbedr).

1921

THE CHAUNTING FEAR

'TIS rare to watch the moon light *Quarley* beeches,
To see it glint through eye-lashes of fir:
To count the seconds till the far owl screeches,
To hearken what small feet begin to stir:
But oh, there be things more than these
Up there, on the Hill of the Trees.

May be, if you are with me, that white gleaming,
Between the junipers and the hawthorn bush,
Is but a silly southdown ewe a-dreaming
Of April pasturage and clover lush.
But oh, there be things more than these
Up there, on the Hill of the Trees.

Listen. One night I was alone on *Quarley*,
Creeping among the the ambuscades of trees:
Dear knows, but I was treading soft and warely,
Hands all outspread and ever-bended knees.

Have you perchance espied a roe-deer stealing
Before the beaters in a northern wood?
Delicately goes he, never a sound revealing
The way he goes. So went I. Then I stood

And trembled. For a solemn sound of chaunting
Rose on the hillside, ever deep and harsh:
Plaints as of a lioness desert-haunting,
Clangour of a heron of the marsh.

Round the trees came the voices, curdling
All the force within me as I cowered;
The very boughs did shrink from that fell girdling,
And sudden leaves and twiglets down were showered.

Then silence came again. And then a waving
Of fierce old arms. And then—a sickle and hand
Struck up against the moon, all heaven braving,
And then—ah, but you will not understand.

Only—if you must go to *Quarley* darkling,
Whenas the sunshine makes not all things clear,
Let you be two that go, with lanthorn sparkling,
Lest that ye meet—ye meet the Chaunting Fear.
For oh, there be things more than these
Up there, on the Hill of the Trees.

1921

TO A VIOLIN

NAY, I'll not hold thee firm again,
Nor set thy strings in tune,
We've shared enough of joy and pain:
Thine arching form shall dumb remain,
    We'll shout no more—nor croon.

Thou'st been with me from spot to spot,
    My hopes and thoughts were thine,
Ours was a single-hearted lot:
But better now 'twere all forgot,
    —Thy passion-throes, and mine.

Thou canst not counsel me: thy heart
    Is dead, since mine is so:
They cannot sing that are apart;
Dear singer, that to me thou art,
    Thou helpest tears to flow,

And we have promised—thou and I—
    Not to complain nor fret;
For one there is would have us try
To think not of the bye and bye,
    But wholly to forget.

And I have told to thee my love,
    And thou hast sung it forth:
For how could I the friend reprove
That told my secret out above
    In wild airs of the north?

Ours is one common memory
    Of scene and word and thought:
And, if my ear was bowed to thee,
The sad joy of our constancy
    Would come again unsought.

For we have known much solitude
    In dark or gay-lit hall,
Where others craved a brighter mood:
Whate'er was bad, if aught was good,
    We must forget it all.

Yet hadst thou, for a silver string,
    Some dull-toned chord of gold,
Thy music had a less true ring:
And yet—and yet the peacocks sing,
    And so *their* loves are told!

But, hark—I did but lightly brush
    A string in swathing thee:
"We *must* remember . . ." Hush, O hush!
Be still, and help that hope to crush
    Of what can never be.

And so I lay thee by, my sure,
    It may be truest, friend:
Our severance shall keep love pure,
    And thou and I—we will endure
    In silence, to the end.

1898

LONGER PIECES AND EXTRACTS

SOUL-SIGHT

A LITTLE nearer: thank you. You may leave us.
But stay—the curtains—are they drawn? They are?
Then draw the curtains back: she loved the light.
I will stand here, beside her where she lies,
And my left hand shall tell me of her forehead,
And my right hand shall hold hers—for a space.
I think you are gone now?
Dearest, they are gone,
And I will talk quite openly to you.
What shall we say about this change—this death?
Shall I say "Dearest, you are happier now,"
Or "How I look to meet your welcoming?"
Or do we both know that our thoughts are these,
And need no talk of the future? Of the past?
Why, it was full of happiness and grief,
And in the future shall be none of these,
Not joy, nor sorrow, only you and I,
One soul true-fitted to the Greatest Soul.
But yet that happiness, those griefs, were ours,
And till the future comes, they are my life.
As in the old days (you remember them?)
When you and I apart kept festivals,
One day was bright, because a year ago
"That letter came"; another dear to you,
"Because this day last year we walked together."
That was the old way. Can we better it?

Dearest, *I* cannot. You will bear with me?
There—I have found your lips, and they are smiling,
And here is soft warm sunshine kissing them;
And you, I think, are in the sunshine too,
So, maybe, 'tis yourself that kiss my hand.
I wonder, is it all joy in your world,
Or has the Wisest sown some sorrow there,
Some docks to make our lilies better worth?
You must forgive me, you must understand,
If my poor thoughts are earthy. I am here
Where you were, dearest, till you went away.
How bright the sun feels to my finger-tips!
Yes, sunshine, you were always part of that,
My own, own sunshine. How you petted me!
Because—because you loved me, first; and then
Because these eyes were darkened. Foolish sunshine,
To think I needed any eyes but yours!
Do you remember, all those years ago,
When I could see, but might not, in that letter
You said, "for us there *must* be happiness,
Or else——" and then, I'm sure, those lips grew stern
And stayed the sentence? Well, I knew you then,
And strove and hoped and smiled (you bade me smile)
Month after month, each longer than a year,
And learnt what manhood was and purity.
Dearest, did you believe (I think you did),
Did *I* believe that we should come to—this?
The world—the world that you and I rebuked—

The world that praised my books and hated me,
That world will murmur, hearing you are gone,
"The pity of it! How her life was spoilt!
We hate such selfishness." . . . They never loved.
For selfishness is fear, and in our love
There was no fear, nor any selfishness.
Why should we reason with them, you that stood
The bravest heart in all the world, and I
That fought for your one promise—Victory?
And after victory, and after wounds
(Though happiness is better far than sight),
You came to me and took my hand and wrote,
And we sent forth our pæan to the world.
It heard and liked not. . . . In the after time
Be sure I will make haste to burn away
All this that makes my soul a laggard soul.
And you will come to me sometimes: for I
Shall see you dearest. . . . They disturb us.
Hush!
See that my stumbling may not waken her:
Lead me below; and then, will you return
And draw the curtains? She is not there now.

1898

AN ABSTRACT

HE'S lying dead, about a mile from here;
You'll find him by the eighth new heap of stones,
That is, if you desire to find a—No?
Well, I'm the better pleased: my time is short,
The last train's always punctual—to a fault!—
And I must be before it: yes, before it.
In medias res for once—no journalism!
He'd money, and they married her to him.
Beside his money, he'd a dog's own face,
A mind undisciplined, sheer animal.
I know it's an old story—always was;
But nowadays black-letter's hardly read,
And I have tried this night to print it clearer.
—Forgive me! She was miserable soon.
I went to Spain—the only thing to do,
For I desired her happiness; and she,
—I'd have you know, sir, she is worth a life,
The best, the truest woman in—forgive me!
Just this word more. She made me do some good.
I waited seven years. Then poverty,
—Some fate, perhaps, but hunger certainly—
Brought me to England: there I heard
Six facts about him, seven, fit to damn him.
A week ago (you may have seen the case)
That jury could not free her fettered soul
Because her body hid his cruelty.

The soul, you see, is underneath the skin,
And he had never struck, not even once!
The dog—dead dog, he daren't. Again, forgive me!
I tracked him hither, studied ways and means
(He's got a friend here, very snugly housed)
And then, just now I met him. I must go,
For there's a chance they'll ticket me insane,
And make me live, to fret her with my life.
He's gone. I'm going. She may start afresh.
—She loved me? God knows that. I think she did.

1898

GIBRALTAR

OPENING OF AN EXERCISE SUBMITTED FOR THE NEWDIGATE PRIZE AT OXFORD, 1897

SHALL wars, then, never cease? Shall fear and hate
For ever wound and slay, insatiate?
Must men deal death to men? Must human blood
Still flow unending as the river-flood?
Shall man to man for ever hotly cry,
"Thou art to blame, and therefor thou shalt die?"
The plains of Marathon sound not to-day
With triumph-shouts and shriekings of dismay:
Where frighted Italy repelled her foes,
On quiet hills the peaceful olive grows:

No fierce barbarians hapless cities seize,
Demanding entrance and the fruits of ease:
The men that conquered shall not war again;
Napoleon is not: gone is Tamburlaine.
So would we look for peace, but fear the while,
For Europe's is a hard, uncertain smile.
Crouching they lie, the mighty ones, and wait
The fix'd, unchangeable decrees of fate.
Hark! from amid the mist, a muffled roar
Rending the cloud-banks that the night-wind bore,
A sound uncouth, and slow to pass away
In sullen sighs along the leaden bay.
So to Gibraltar morning comes. Behold,
Upward, from crag to crag, the mists unfold,
And now the sun shoots down a gleaming ray
To touch the topmost pinnacle—'tis day.
Here is no peace! A Rock immense and sheer,
Whose very aspect might awaken fear;
About its base the sea, on either hand
The tow'ring mountains of a hostile land.
No glades are here—no meadows of delight,
No glens, no rivers to enchant the sight.
Nay, 'tis the house of war, and here, alone,
He guards unceasingly his ancient throne,
Loving no beauty in his house, nor grace,
But instruments of death in every place.
From under rocky brows huge cannon glare,
The Rock's protection, and its foes' despair;

The clear sea-water dimples but to hide
Its fearful mines along the harbour-side:
For armed and wakeful must the fortress be
That guards the portals of the inland sea.
Gibraltar knows not peace; the world was young
When the first song of victory was sung,
To tell the advent of a stronger foe,
Lord of the Rock by might of spear and bow.
Oft Calpe gave the pirate crews a home,
Till squandered treasure once more bade them roam,
Or when perchance a forceful fleet was sent
From Roman docks to mete them punishment.
No land for tranquil folk, that till the ground
And love the soil where wheat and vine abound.
But, as in northern hills, when eagles pair,
Locked beak and talon, hurtling in the air
Two male-birds struggle for some ledge of rock
Where safest may be reared a lusty stock;
Each screaming fights amain, to win a nest,
Whence he may range for prey, and none molest:
So round Gibraltar strife continued long,
As fortune favoured or denied the strong. . . .

1896

THE AUCTION
(*Conclusion*)

AN EXTRACT

A bystander. He remembers that God gave neither love, nor purity, nor any portion of His divinity to be bought with a price.

DAUGHTER, keep thee pure within;
Son, set less by ease and pelf;
Mother, commune not with sin;
Father, see beyond thyself,

Put the yoke of London off;
Other yokes are worthier far.
Let the fashion-setters scoff—
Ye have souls to make—or mar.

London shall fulfil her doom,
Breeding utter selfishness.
Stand ye in a larger room;
God drives no man to the less.

Maiden, we have need of thee,
Need of fearless, honest eyes,
Need of love and purity:
Be thou tender, be thou wise.

Maiden, think not "I will save,
Give my life to heal his sin."
Let the flesh-fed gaze-hound rave,
But a purer love begin.

Maiden, thou art strongest. Strive,
    Draw thy mother back to truth;
Teach thy father's heart to live;
    Make thy brother prize his youth.

Let this selfishness be slain,
    Sneering as it writhes and dies:
Let the truth arise again;
    Yea, let Very Truth arise.

God be with thee—God and Love,
    They that are the Soul. The Soul?
Bear that steady gaze above!
    God and Love—that are the Whole.

1898

A PLEA FOR THE OLD MIGHT

"What tidings at Camelot?" said the one. "By my head," said the other, "there have I been and espied the court of King Arthur, and there is such a fellowship they may never be broken, and well nigh all the world holdeth with Arthur, for there is the flower of chivalry."—MALORY's *Morte d'Arthur*.

LET the land have her swords. Are there no fires,
Fierce fires, to weld the man into his strength?
Are there no waters of adversity,
To temper man, that he may spring again,
And yet again, to meet the stronger stroke?
Yea, there are these, and the young hearts and thews,

The pulse that must beat out, and the clear gaze
Showing the youngest stern and masterful.
My brothers, come ye forth into the sun,
That it may glint from lifted blade to brow:
And do ye stand there, each by other's side—
For each of you would die for each, and he
Would kill himself rather than thou should'st die;
The while, maybe, some unknown died for some.
But let there be no sorrowing. The land
Wearies of sorrowing and selfishness.
For all her sons are sad, as love were lost,
—Because the eyes of selfishness are blind.
Let there be hating then of enemies,
And smiting of the common foe, with pain
Borne for another's welfare silently,
And fusing of the paltry "mine" in "ours."
So shall ye find again your life and love,
That now are hidden from you. Go ye forth.

1899

STRICKEN

"*OF youthful eyes made old by sorrowing.*"
He had not read it easily, that sonnet,
Nor did I wonder at his silence now.
For he and I were close as friends may be
Who cherish friendship, and I knew his grief,
Knew it for what it was, a wound in the soul,
Past cure of any worldly circumstance.
And so we lived together, he and I,
And worked, and shared our little means—and lived.
I lost my troubles in my love of him,
In this one hope that he would yet be great,
A comforter of men, some Barnabas.
Yes, I had prayed for it—though more and more
The fear came over me, despite myself,
That all my hoping was but vanity.
Men knew his power, talked of him in clubs,
Looked for the message he had promised us.
No message, none. I said, "He is not well,
But he will surely write—when he is well."
And they, "Ah, can you not encourage him?"
And I had travelled with him, read him books,
Strained our firm friendship with importunacy.
Yet he would only smile, say, "Thank you, friend,
Without you 'twould go very hard with me."
His was a killing grief. The maid he loved,
The maid who loved him—well, they bartered her.

She long resisted, but her mother's craft,
All set on making profit of a daughter,
Outwore a spirit stronger than its flesh.
So her sweet soul that God meant for my friend's
Was every day in torture—dying—dead,
Bound to the lust-whims of a a mis-called husband.
I've no philosophy; but I had a friend
On whom the world was waiting—still must wait,
Since, as he read to me, he left that world.
There's one more mother whom remorse shall choke,
One more foul husband whom the dogs shall scorn:
One woman more—aye, those were his last words,
"*Of youthful eyes made old by sorrowing.*"

1898

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